

# ISTHMIAN CANAL FIGHTS FOR FAVOR IN NEW CONGRESS.

Hepburn, Who Will Be Chairman of Committee Which Will Deal with the Project, Introduces Another Bill.

Other Members Declare Strongly for the Measure, Urging Uselessness of Delay for Report from Walker.

Fight of the Transcontinental Road Lobby Has Been Begun—They Object to "Any Precipitate Action."

Washington, D. C., Dec. 7.—The fight between the transcontinental roads and the proponents of the Nicaragua Canal began today with the introduction of a bill by representative Hepburn providing for the construction of the canal. Mr. Hepburn is chairman of the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce in the 56th Congress and will hold the same position again.

This bill will be referred to his committee, and he desires immediate legislation, and sees no necessity for postponement of legislative action until the Isthmian Canal Commission's report is prepared, a year or more now.

The anti-canal lobby is already here, and it is not that there shall be no canal, but that no precipitate action be taken in the Walker Commission is obtaining in the subject. That is the more artifice of the lobbyists.

It will be recalled that last Winter Senator Morgan and Representative Hepburn introduced a bill providing for the construction of the canal. Mr. Morgan favored the utilization of the Maritime Company's franchise and the working of the project by the Government. Mr. Hepburn suggested the construction and ownership of the canal by this country and acquisition of sovereignty along the route.

His Bill Slightly Modified. The bill introduced today is a slight modification of last year's, in that it gives absolute control of the territory covered by the prospective canal and minutes the proposition to acquire sovereignty as calculated to cause complicating delays.

The opposition last Winter to final action sufficient to prevent the desired legislation, and a law providing for the appointment of a new committee instructed to report on all practical routes was enacted. The Nicaragua Canal Commission, the successor of the present Isthmian Canal Commission, made an exhaustive report several months ago. This report demonstrated that a canal was feasible, and would prove less expensive than was generally supposed.

The present commission has accepted the report of the old commission on the subject of the Nicaragua route, and the friends of the canal are now urging action. "I can see no reason for further postponement," said Representative Hepburn today. "This waterway is of the utmost importance from the commercial and strategic standpoints. Its speedy construction is a national duty. In my judgment, this waterway could be utilized as an economical and rapid subsidizing scheme, and I believe that that will be its chief value."

One Important Consideration. Assuming that three round trips through the canal in a year for a 6,000-ton vessel would be \$48,000, and the American shipowner could send his ship back and forth free, the item would be an important consideration. It would mean more than compensation for the cargoes the vessels would have to take to carry sufficient coal.

"I do not believe that the Clayton-Bulwer treaty will be seriously urged by Great Britain as an objection to the United States building, controlling and fortifying the canal."

"Great Britain practically abrogated the Clayton-Bulwer treaty when she got control of the canal route via the Panama Canal," said Representative Hepburn. "I shall do my best to get speedy and favorable action on the canal project."

Representative James Sherman, of New York, who was the second member of the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce of the last Congress, and who will retain that position in the present Congress, said today:

"I can see no reason for awaiting a report from the Isthmian Canal Commission before taking definite action in this Congress on the canal project."

The sentiment is given forth from prospective members of the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce indicate that this committee is disposed at present to make short work of the proposed canal legislation.

Adams, of Georgia—I voted for Mr. Hepburn's bill in the last Congress. I am in favor of the building of an Isthmian canal.

Davis, of Florida—I am in favor of the building of an Isthmian canal.

Cortis, of Michigan—I am in favor of the building of an Isthmian canal.

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